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SUBJECT: NINEWA: WESTERN SUNNIS STILL BOTHERED BY KURDISH
TACTICS BUT LOOKING FORWARD TO ELECTIONS

Classified By: NINEWA PRT LEADER JASON HYLAND: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

Summary: KDP Over-reaching Raises Arab Ire

¶1. (C/REL ACGU) Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) actions in western Ninewa remain the biggest point of political conflict, according to a cross-section of Sunni Arabs based around the Rabia'a border crossing. In a series of late May meetings with Special Advisor on Northern Iraq Affairs Ambassador Thomas Krajieski, Sunni Arabs from the two biggest wings of the Shammar tribe complained of Kurdish control of the area's security forces, Kurdish harassment of Arabs and Yezidis who speak out against the Kurds, and fear of Kurdish manipulation in the elections. None of these complaints is new, but with the approach of possible October elections, the Sunni Arabs of western Ninewa may be using them increasingly as rallying points for their constituencies.

Shammar Leaders Decry KDP Actions

¶2. (C/REL ACGU) Shammar Sheikh Abdullah Al Yawr told Ambassador Krajieski on May 29 that KDP control of western Ninewa was heavy-handed and skewed in favor of Kurds and Kurdish supporters. Also attending the meeting were MND-North Commanding General MG Hertling, MND-N DCG BG Thomas, Third Armored Cavalry Regimental Commander COL Bills and PRT Leader Hyland. Abdullah, a major leader of the Shammar who live both north and south of the Kurdish and Yezidi enclave of Sinjar, complained that Ninewa Vice Governor and provincial KDP chief Khasro Goran "acts more like the Vice Governor of Dohuk than the Vice Governor of Ninewa."

¶3. (C/REL ACGU) Sticking to his regular script, Abdullah said the KDP worked with local security forces to arrest opponents of a Kurdish presence in western Ninewa, conspired to hold Arab detainees outside Ninewa, and blocked Arabs from traveling to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) for medical treatment. Abdullah complained that these KDP activities were run by Sarbast Amur Terwaneshi, the western Ninewa KDP chief. "Sarbast is a killer," Abdullah said. He predicted that the Tal Afar sub-district of Zumar, north of the city of Tal Afar, would pose the "biggest problem" in resolving western Ninewa disputed territory issues. "The KDP will do worse to Zumar and Sinjar than Saddam did to the Kurds," Abdullah predicted.

¶4. (C/REL ACGU) Krajieski heard roughly similar complaints of KDP over-reaching from leaders of the minor Rakkan clan of the Shammar tribe. Nasser Rakkan said the Sunni Arab areas north of Sinjar and south of the KRG were "stuck in the mouth of the lion," with the KDP indirectly causing administrative and security problems in areas that it does not control.

Hatem Rakkan complained that the KDP had given pro-KRG citizens preference in government hiring. Hatem also said the sub-district of Zumar could present a problem to resolving western Ninewa's disputed territory issues. He suggested patience in developing a stable long-term solution for western Ninewa, rather than pushing for a quick half solution.

¶5. (C/REL ACGU) In a separate meeting with Krajeski on May 29, Sinjar KDP leader Sarbast said conditions in western Ninewa were "as bad as Darfur," indicating that it was only the KDP that kept security, politics and economics afloat in Sinjar. In a tightly controlled and scripted meeting reminiscent of communist party gatherings of the 1950,s, Sarbast introduced Krajeski to a large group of Sinjar residents from various ethnic and religious groups, all of whom enthusiastically endorsed joining the KRG.

Yezidis Go With the Flow

¶6. (C/REL ACGU) In a May 30 meeting in eastern Ninewa's Sheikhan district with Yezidi spiritual leader Baba Sheikh and the son of Yezidi prince Tahsin Beg, Hazem Beg, Krajeski heard that the Yezidis consider themselves distinct from the Kurds. However, the Sheikhan leaders said they are pragmatic and realize that the Kurds can offer them better security. Yezidi leaders collected by Sarbast at the Sinjar KDP headquarters said they were Kurdish and wished to join the KRG. Hatem Rakkan and Abdullah al Yawr said the Yezidis had never been considered Kurds and were only being pressured into saying so by the Kurds.

BAGHDAD 00001701 002 OF 002

Western Ninewa Increasingly Pro-GOI

¶7. (C/REL ACGU) In contrast to Abdullah's disdain for Ninewa's provincial government, the Shammar sheikh expressed great support for the attention Prime Minister al Maliki and Vice President Hashimi had given to western Ninewa. Abdullah and other western Sunni Arab leaders have told PRTOffs since mid-May that they were happy with the level of support they have seen from the central government, citing visits by Hashimi, the deputy Minister of Interior and a special representative of al Maliki. Specifically, they praised the hiring in the Sunni Arab district of Ba'aj of 500 new Iraqi Police. In addition, local leaders praised the reassignment of the 280 Iraqi Police officers province-wide as a move to re-align loyalties toward an MOI-centric command structure, while reducing the influence of local personalities. In contrast, Sinjar KDP leader Sarbast called the late May reshuffling of 280 Ninewa police officials by the Ministry of Interior a "big mistake." Tal Afar Mayor Najim, a Sunni Arab, publicly condemned the IP shake-up, but praised the Prime Minister's May visit to Mosul. Following a series of al Maliki-Najim meetings in Mosul, the Prime Minister dispatched a senior aide to Tal Afar and a delegation of senior directors from various ministries visited the western Ninewa city to push forward reconstruction projects.

¶8. (C/REL ACGU) Hatem Rakkan said the Shammar lack political unity and would likely be split in the October elections. Abdullah said he does not plan personally to contest the elections, but that the Shammar are organizing. Sarbast said the KDP is ready for elections now.

Comment: Elections and Increased Aid Prompt Engagement

¶9. (C/REL ACGU) While Kurdish-Sunni Arab tensions in western Ninewa remain high, GOI efforts to expand its security and reconstruction reach into the disputed areas west of Mosul seem to be winning support even among traditionally insurgent-friendly Sunni Arab groups. A combination of

increased assistance and election-related posturing seems to be prompting the increased attention as well as the local eagerness to engage.

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